

SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND NEGATIVE PARTISANSHIP AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

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For my family who has been there for me every step of the way. Thank you for your endless support and encouragement throughout my academic journey. This is dedicated to you. Who loves you?

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ABSTRACT

Social Media Use and Negative Partisanship among College Students
(Written by Savannah Maas under the direction of Conor Dowling)

Since the creation of the United States of America, the political climate has vastly changed and adapted, each time period with its own distinct characteristics. Today, the American electorate and Congress are more polarized than ever and “negative partisanship” has become a central characteristic in politics. Partisan identities of voters are more homogenous than ever and approval rates of opposing parties and partisans are at an all-time low. People’s political decisions have begun to be more driven by dislike of the opposing party than support of their own. Social media has also grown over recent years and has begun to play a role in politics. The American electorate and political officials alike are able to share, discuss, and argue political information with people across the country in a matter of seconds. In this thesis, I examine prior research on polarization, partisanship, negative partisanship and studies that explore the relationship between social media and politics. I also discuss the reasoning behind the design for my survey, which was conducted at the University of Mississippi. Last, the thesis concludes with an examination of my original survey, which sheds light on the relationship between negative partisanship and social media use.

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Introduction

Throughout the political history of the United States, there have almost always been only two major political parties competing for power. These parties, and their officials, are voted in by the citizens of the United States. Naturally, citizens tend to identify more with one party than the other. There were periods where a party could remain in power for decades at a time and citizens would vote across party lines. However, both of those instances have nearly vanished from today's political sphere. The American electorate has become polarized and there appears to be little common ground between the Democratic and Republican Parties (Pew Research 2014). Straight-ticket voting is at an all-time high and there is close competition between parties (Abramowitz 2015). That being said, the way in which American citizens talk about politics has also changed. Rather than simply having policy disputes, citizens and political officials alike have engaged in partisan warfare and will attack the morality and credibility of those from the opposing party (Pew Research 2014). Recent research has emerged that studies the effect of all of these factors and has coined a term to help explain the current political climate: *negative partisanship* (Abramowitz and Webster 2017).

Negative partisanship is premised on the idea that one's political decisions are driven more by dislike of the opposing party than support of their own. And seeing the way Democrats and Republicans view and interact with each other, there is little argument that negative partisanship is prevalent. In addition, there has also been a new factor introduced to the political stage: social media. Since the creation of Facebook in 2004, social media sites have grown in number and exponentially increased in the number of

users across America. Citizens have the ability to obtain information and interact with whomever they desire in a matter of seconds. Social media has also become a platform for politics. While some research has been conducted to study the effects of social media and politics (e.g.) Duggan and Smith 2016), my thesis aims to study a more specific phenomenon: the relationship between social media use and negative partisanship. I conducted my study at the University of Mississippi, targeting a group that uses social media extremely frequently—college students. It is pertinent to study this relationship because both social media and negative partisanship will continue to be forces at work in politics.

The first part of this thesis addresses background information relating to the subject and is a literature review that summarizes past findings relating to my study. Following that, I present my survey design and explain the logic and details for the study. Next, the results section contains original research that contributes to knowledge of the relationship between social media use and negative partisanship. The thesis then concludes with a discussion of some of the implications of my findings.

Literature Review: Political Polarization and Social Media Use

It is no secret that the American political sphere is rapidly changing and is becoming more polarized. “Republicans and Democrats are more divided along ideological lines - and partisan antipathy is deeper and more extensive - than at any point in the last two decades” (Pew Research 2014). Record numbers of ideological uniformity and partisan animosity have become characteristic of today’s politics and have played a role in increased polarization.

In 1952, the American National Election Studies first began measuring party identification. According to this survey, in 2012, 91 percent of party identifiers (including partisan “leaners”)¹ voted for their party’s presidential candidate—tying the record set in 2004 and matched in 2008. The 2012 House and Senate elections also either matched or broke party loyalty records that had been set around 60 years ago. Also gathered from this survey, high rates of party loyalty were accompanied by high rates of straight ticket voting. Both the presidential and House elections and presidential and Senate elections of 2012 broke records for straight-ticket voting set in 1952 and 1960, respectively (Abramowitz and Webster 2015). In the 1990 midterm election, 63 percent of states with Senate races voted for the same candidate for president as for Senate. In 2014, 91 percent of states did (Bump 2016). And, in 2016, that metric was 100 percent (Phillips 2016). This was the first time ever that all states with Senate races on the ballot voted for the same party in both the presidential and Senate races (Enten 2016). In sum, the electorate is more likely than ever to vote consistently for their party and not vote across party lines.

¹ Partisan “leaners” are those who identify as “independent” but state that they lean toward (“feel more closely to”) one of the two major political parties.

Not only are partisans voting in a more unified manner, but the composition of the parties has also become increasingly unified. This is not to say that the political center has disappeared, but that partisan subgroups have become increasingly homogeneous (Fiorina and Abrams 2015). “Self-identified Democrats have become more homogeneously liberal and self-identified Republicans have become more homogeneously conservative” (Fiorina and Abrams 2015, 42). The overall share of Americans who express consistently conservative or consistently liberal opinions has doubled over the past two decades, growing from 10% to 21% (Pew Research 2014).²

Not only are the two major parties becoming more ideologically uniform, they are becoming much more ideologically distant from one another as well. In public surveys conducted in 1994 and 2004, 49% of the public claimed to take roughly an equal number of conservative and liberal positions. In 2014, that figure shrunk to 39% (Pew Research 2014). This shift is representative of both parties moving in opposite directions. Moreover, there is currently almost no ideological overlap between the parties. In 2014, 92% of Republicans were reported to be to the right of the median Democrat compared to 64% twenty years ago. Similarly, 94% of Democrats were to the left of the median Republican, up from 70% in 1994. This trend is evident not only in the electorate, but also among elected officials. As Pew Research concludes, “partisan sorting has contributed to the extreme partisanship seen in Washington and other major capitals” (2014). Officials are more likely to be conservative/liberal and they used to be nominated by more heteroge-

² Ideological “consistency” in this case is a relatively high bar. In the Pew Research study cited, respondents were classified as ideologically consistent if they gave a consistently liberal or conservative response to a series of 10 issue-position questions.

neous support groups. Party polarization in Congress has reached a record high and is the most polarized it has been since the Reconstruction Era (Hare, Poole, and Rosenthal 2014). Due to this congressional polarization, there has been an almost complete disappearance of ideological moderates in both parties.

And as parties are growing ideologically further apart, the closeness of party competition at the national level has also grown. The closeness of today's party competition is not typical of American politics. Throughout the history of the United States, there have been bouts of time where one party has dominated for multiple election cycles and years at a time. As Lee notes, "the last three decades have seen the longest history of near parity in party competition for control of the national institutions since the Civil War" (Lee 2015, 77). This competition has fueled partisan conflict because it has raised the political stakes for every policy issue. More than ever, constituents of a party are more likely to change their position on a policy issue rather than switch parties. And because there has been great change in the composition of parties and the issues that divide these parties, there is every reason to believe these trends will continue.

Since 2008, consistent party loyalty has reached its highest levels in the past half century (Abramowitz and Webster 2015). Not only have the two constituencies of each of the parties changed, the way these two parties interact has also drastically changed. A lot of recent research has emerged to study a phenomenon now known as *negative partisanship*. Negative partisanship develops when the partisan identities of voters are strongly related to other salient social and political characteristics. In research reported by Politico, it was found that since 1980, supporters of both major parties, including independents

who “lean” toward one party or another, have grown to dislike the opposing party and its elected leaders more than they like their own party and its elected leaders (Abramowitz and Webster 2017). This notion of negative partisanship became especially evident in the most recent 2016 election. A Pew Research survey found that both candidates received mediocre ratings from supporters of their own party and record low ratings from members of the opposing party (2016)³.

However, it is not just officials of the opposing party that partisans have come to dislike. Today, 58% of Republicans have a very unfavorable impression of the Democratic Party, up from 46% in 2014 and just 32% during 2008. Similarly, Democrats’ highly negative views of the GOP have grown from 37% in 2008 to 43% in 2014 and 55% in 2016 (Pew Research 2016). And it is these feelings that also translate into support of their own party’s policies. A greater percentage of Republicans, 68%, say a major reason they identify with the GOP is that “the Democratic Party’s policies are harmful to the country,” than the percentage of Republicans who say they believe “the Republican Party’s policies are good for the country,” which is 64%. For Democrats, 68% say they identify with the Democratic Party because they believe Democratic policies are good for the country; 62% of Democrats say they identify with the Democratic Party because Republican policies are bad for the country. Yet, not only do members of each party see the policies of the opposing party negatively, they also reflect those feelings towards the constituents of the opposing party. Seventy percent of Democrats say that Republicans, in general, are more closed-minded than other Americans and 42% say Republicans are

³ It is important to note that the 2016 election between Clinton and Trump was likely influenced by factors other than negative partisanship.

more dishonest. Similarly, 47% of Republicans view Democrats as immoral and 46% view them as lazy. In addition, Republicans and Democrats are similar in the fact that about 42% of party identifiers from each party say that it would be *easier* to get along with a new neighbor who belongs to their own party rather than a new neighbor who does not belong to their own party (Pew Research 2016).

One of the explanations for these widely-held distastes of opposing parties is that “party polarization is also a social process where partisans are driven by a growing team spirit that is disconnected from policy considerations” (Mason 2015, 55). When partisan and ideological identities intensify and become more aligned, people become more prejudiced against partisan opponents. Mason examined American National Election Studies data and found that no matter what one believes about policy, we are growing prejudiced against our opponents, more vocal, and more emotionally volatile (2015, 56). Research in social psychology has found that when one of our social groups (i.e., Republicans) is in conflict with another group (i.e., Democrats) that group identity becomes more central to the idea of who we are. As a result, people are more likely to respond to politics as members of partisan teams rather than as citizens. Because many people seem to have adopted a team mentality when it comes to politics, humans are naturally hard-wired to feel like losers when their group loses, and to feel like winners when their group wins (Mason 2015, 58). In terms of social groups, when our social group is under threat, humans naturally lash out at our opponents. All in all, even though partisans can believe they are responding to specific policy disputes, they are also being driven by a natural instinct to defend their social group. It has been shown that social polarization is driven more so by

political identities than policy opinions (Mason 2015, 59). In terms of what that means for the nation, it means that there is a whole group of partisans who act like they disagree more than they probably do. It does not matter whether partisans agree or disagree, or what the argument is about, partisans just want their side to win. As Mason concludes, “the more sorted and powerful our political identities become, the less capable we are of treating our opponents with fairness and equanimity” (2015, 60).

One of the reasons animosity between the parties is growing is because the issues dividing the parties have changed. When examining the patterns through recent decades of how differences between party positions have changed, there is a very evident trend in today’s political electorate. Drutman examined the differences between Clinton and Trump voters along 12 issue dimensions. He found that “supporters of Clinton and Trump are very polarized on identity and moral issues ... Trump voters held more negative attitudes than Clinton supporters about black people, are much less supportive of immigration, and have much more negative feelings toward Muslims” (Drutman 2017, 8). And, more than ever, parties are divided across racial and religious lines. In terms of what this means for polarization, the differences between parties today makes productive, respectful discussion about politics more difficult. This is in part because when it comes to moral issues, they have much more emotion attached to them than, say, government budgeting. When someone, or a party, holds views that one perceives as morally wrong, it is much harder to find compromise. This inability to see eye-to-eye often leads to mistrust and frustration. As a naturally human psychological phenomenon, people sort themselves into social groups. Today, parties have become increasingly viewed as one of those social

groups. And when the integrity of one's social group is at stake, they are more likely to lash out in order to defend their group. It is because of the fact that today's divisive issues garner more emotion and pull into question the morality of policy that partisans are less able to engage in politics calmly while respecting a multiplicity of viewpoints.

The Media and Political Polarization

The way in which we gain political information also plays a role in increasing party polarization. In recent decades, the number of news sources and channels has astronomically increased, giving people more choices of where to get their political news. Not only has the number of sources drastically increased, these sources are becoming increasingly ideologically defined. A study by Martin and Yurukoglu of Stanford University explored whether people's voting behavior is associated with what they see on cable news. In 2000 and 2004, a typical Democrat was no more likely than a typical Republican to watch MSNBC. By 2008, a typical Democrat was 20 percentage points more likely to watch MSNBC. The reverse trend was true for viewers of Fox News. It was also found that increased exposure to news from those sources was associated with people's votes. In 2008, watching an hour of MSNBC daily was associated with a 3.6 percentage point decreased likelihood of voting Republican. On the flip side, watching Fox News for an hour was associated with a 3.5 percentage point increased likelihood of voting Republican. Fox News and MSNBC do not simply attract like-minded people, they also heighten divisions among voters, which may increase political polarization (Sunstein 2016, 62).

It is important to note that a great deal of Americans prefer not to listen to partisan media or identify themselves as partisan. Although the American electorate and Congress

are more polarized than ever, there are also more Americans who identify themselves as “moderates” than ever. However, recent advances in measuring ideological ideal points suggests that many moderates are actually more extreme ideologically than their self-placements indicate (Hare and Poole 2015). Specifically, when researchers account for an individual’s level of political information and where they place common objects (i.e., the Republican and Democratic Parties) there is a 38% drop in overlap between Democrats and Republicans and a 46% drop in overlap between Obama and Romney voters compared to self-placements (Hare and Poole 2015, 38). In other words, even though more and more people are identifying themselves as “moderates” or “independents,” when we account for differences in how Americans define “liberals,” “moderates,” and “conservatives,” we get a picture of a more polarized electorate than if we rely on self-placement data alone.

One of the reasons there is an increase of people who identify as nonpartisan is because they believe that openly identifying as a partisan will make a negative impression on others. This is especially prevalent due to the rise in negative partisanship and partisan warfare. “Parties today have been portrayed by the media less as principled representatives arguing eloquently for their beliefs and more as cranky children who do not want to share” (Klar and Krupnikov 2016, 27). This kind of coverage that portrays the parties as stubborn and the disagreement between parties as insurmountable leads people to view partisanship, from either party, as increasingly undesirable (Klar and Krupnikov 2016, 27). The belief that there are negative traits associated with partisanship in general often leads people who might identify with a party to avoid identifying as partisans. Al-

beit, it is important to note that the number of “pure” independents has remained steady over the past decades while the number of “leaners” has increased (Klar and Krupnikov 2016, 18). Leaners, however, tend to behave just like partisans—as shown by the trends in straight-ticket voting discussed above. This phenomenon of increasing numbers of self-identified moderates is important to note in relation to the media and political behavior. Not only do people have the choice of which station to tune into, but they also have the option not to tune into the media. As a result, those people can avoid the news altogether and are less likely to participate (Levendusky 2015, 97). “This means that the growth of media choices strengthens the extremes while hollowing out the center, making the electorate more divided” (Levendusky 2015, 97).

With so many options to get political news from, it is easy to tune out or not listen to viewpoints that don’t correlate with one’s own. Because diverse groups are now seeing and hearing quite different points of view, or focusing on different topics, mutual understanding and collaboration becomes difficult (Sunstein 2016, 67). Without having exposure to the competing view, it becomes harder to address divergent concerns of fellow citizens. Exposure to competing positions generally increases political tolerance (Mutz 2006) and many people are more respectful of alternative positions, and more willing to consider those opinions to be legitimate (Sunstein 2016, 91). However, people are increasingly funneling their sources of political information and choosing sources that tend to reinforce their prior dispositions. Not only are people more likely to listen to news sources that agree with their views, but they are also more likely to listen to people that agree with their views. An experiment in Colorado in 2005 tested the effects of what hap-

pens when people with similar views engage in discussion (Schkade, Sunstein, and Hastie 2007). About sixty people were gathered and separated into more “conservative” and more “liberal” groups and were asked to deliberate on three of the most controversial issues of the day. What the researchers found was that, in almost every group, members ended up with more extreme positions after they spoke with one another. Aside from increasing extremism, the experiment also had an independent effect: it made both liberal and conservative groups significantly more homogeneous, and thus squelched diversity (Sunstein 2016, 69). Before the members of each group had begun to talk, they had expressed a fair amount of internal disagreement. But, after the fifteen minute discussion, these disagreements were reduced. This phenomenon related to group polarization has also become increasingly important due to the rise of social media.

Social Media and Today’s Political Climate

In 2004 Facebook was launched and then, just a couple of years later, Twitter was founded. With the emergence of social media, people now possessed the ability to connect with individuals all over the world in a matter of seconds. It also meant that information could be distributed and conversations could happen at rates like never before. In many ways, social media websites such as Facebook and Twitter offered new platforms for political discussions as well, even if that was not their original intended purpose.

Although one might assume that greater outlets for political discussion and increased access to information would be beneficial to the political climate in the United States, that is not necessarily the case. As discussed previously, even with television sources, people are given the choice of where to get their information. By itself, this is

not a problem. But when options are so plentiful, many people will take the opportunity to listen only or mostly to those points of view they find most agreeable (Sunstein 2016, 64). One study was done to test how people react to different news labels attached to different stories. One of the results was that people were three times more likely to look at a story if it was labeled Republican if they identified as Republican. In contrast, “Democrats showed a real aversion to stories labeled “Fox,” and the CNN and NPR labels created a modest increase in their interest” (Sunstein 2016, 65). More than ever, people now have a greater ability to filter out opinions they do not want to hear. People with distinctive identities engage in group discussion and are able to surround themselves with the opinions of like-minded others while insulating themselves from competing views. This can create a problem for democratic decision making because social media sites can become a breeding ground for polarization.

One of the major problems with the fact that people can create their own social networks of individuals with like-minded views is that it produces echo chambers. As demonstrated by the Colorado experiment, people often become more extreme in their views after speaking with someone who shares similar viewpoints. And when one’s social media base is filled with people with similar dispositions, that effect is amplified because people become more confident in their views. Another reason these echo chambers are problematic is because it produces more homogeneous views. In other words, people are less likely to say something that could potentially not be in line with their partisan tendencies in fear of creating a negative impression among their followers (Sunstein 2016, 73). Even if people within a group hold a minority opinion, they are likely to silence

themselves because they want to be perceived favorably by their group. As a result, groups can become more extreme. It is also important to note that group polarization does not require interaction on social media, it simply requires exposure to the views of others (Sunstein 2016, 73).

In my study, I aim to determine not only how interaction through social media with likewise/competing views influences political polarization, but also how mere exposure to likewise/competing views is associated with political polarization as well. The study also explores how different personal social networks are associated with how partisans interact with, and view, the opposing party. Just as the way people discuss politics in person has changed, it has also changed on the social media front. In terms of echo chambers, people often become more confident in their beliefs and are more likely to voice opinions that will be supported by others' predispositions. However, there remains a great deal of interaction between partisans who share opposing views. I hypothesize that people feel more confident to engage in partisan warfare and, hence, inter party discussions become more volatile and emotional online. Social media, combined with the current factors also affecting polarization, has helped attribute to, and catalyze, today's current political climate of negative partisanship.

Survey Design

In February 2017, 4,000 University of Mississippi students were randomly selected to participate in a survey. This number of students represents about 20% of the student body at the University. The survey was sent to their University issued e-mail accounts. The e-mail addresses were obtained from The Office of Institutional Research, Effectiveness, and Planning at The University of Mississippi. The study was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Mississippi. One of the reasons the student body at the University of Mississippi was selected is because the e-mails are checked regularly by the students, providing for a fast response rate. This sample of respondents was also chosen because many of the questions relate to social media use and college students tend to be more active than older generations on social media. This survey closed on February 14, 2017, and yielded 647 responses. All of the analysis presented below relies on the sample of 550 respondents who completed all of the questions (effective response rate of 14%).

The survey consisted of 35 questions about political ideology, partisanship, relationships between parties, and social media use in relation to politics. In order to get a general sense of our respondent sample and to measure negative partisanship, I asked six questions about party identification and where each person placed themselves in terms of being conservative or liberal. The next four questions asked respondents how they felt about the opposing party and how politics affected their personal life, social media aside. Four questions asked respondents if/how frequently they get news from social media. The remainder of the survey dealt with how social media use and politics are related. Because

I am testing both how seeing and engaging with politics on social media is associated with respondents' behavior, I had to have separate questions for each. Nine questions related to who the respondents follow and what kind of exposure they have to politics on social media. Seven questions then asked about how respondents interact with political information on social media. For instance, some asked whether or not respondents blocked or unfollowed people due to political disagreements. Last, one of the most important questions asked whether any disagreements about politics on social media caused a tension or loss of friendship with someone. Ultimately, this question was used as a comparison to see how all of these different factors affected respondents in their daily lives. The survey instrument is included in the Appendix.

Many of the questions, although important on their own, were cross compared to other questions in order to see how they relate. In particular, much of the data was broken up and compared to in and out group party ratings. The party ratings were derived from a question that asked, "On a scale of 0-100, where 0 is not at all favorable and 100 is extremely favorable, please rate your feelings towards the [Democratic/Republican] Party." The in/out party ratings were formed by taking the scores from respondents for their own party and the opposing party and comparing them. The average in party score is the average score of what all respondents rate their own party (i.e., Democrats feelings towards Democrats and Republicans feelings towards Republicans). The out party score is the average score of what respondents, both Democrats and Republicans, rate the opposing party. These measurements were pertinent to the study because the main purpose is to study

the associations between negative partisanship, which is supposed to be most closely associated with feelings of the opposing party, and social media use.

Survey Results

The results of my study are broken up into two main sections: (1) Partisanship and Negative Partisanship and (2) Social Media Use and Negative Partisanship. The former addresses the basic composition of students at the University of Mississippi and their overall partisanship and general feelings towards politics. The latter is the more central focus of this thesis, and is broken into two main parts: the relations between negative partisanship and (1) being exposed to politics on social media and (2) interacting/engaging with politics on social media.

In order to measure negative partisanship, I compared a great deal of our data to in and out group ratings. The “in group” is composed of individuals’ feelings towards their own party; Democrats’ feelings towards Democrats and Republicans’ feelings towards Republicans. The “out group” is composed of individuals’ feelings towards the opposing party; Democrats’ feelings towards Republicans and Republicans’ feelings towards Democrats. This is necessary because the theory of negative partisanship is driven by the notion that people make more political decisions based off dislike of their out party than support of their in party.

Partisanship and Negative Partisanship

Of the 550 students at the University of Mississippi who answered all the questions, 25.8% identified themselves as Democrats, 23.3% identified themselves as Independents, and 50.9% identified themselves as Republicans. These figures are consistent

with the culture on campus as the University of Mississippi tends to be more conservative. When the respondents were asked to place themselves on a liberal-conservative scale, ranging from 0 (extremely liberal) to 100 (extremely conservative), the mean for the students was 55.1. The students were also asked to give an average rating out of 100 in terms of favorability towards each party. Overall, the Democratic Party received a rating of 40.4 and the Republican Party received a rating of 51.2.

However, those figures begin to differ when I broke up favorability by party identification. In other words, how Democrats rate their own party versus how they rate the Republican Party and vice versa, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Average Favorability Toward the Parties (0-100 scale)		
	Favorability toward Democratic Party	Favorability toward Republican Party
All Respondents	40.4	51.2
Democratic Respondents	66.2	18.4
Republican Respondents	25.1	73.0
Independent Respondents	45.1	40.1

Note: Respondents were asked, “On a scale of 0-100, where 0 is not at all favorable and 100 is extremely favorable, please rate your feelings towards the [**Democratic/Republican**] **Party**.” [bold in original]

In addition to the differences between parties displayed in Table 1, it is also important to note that only 5% of Republicans and 5% of Democrats give the opposing party a rating of 50 or higher. In other words, 95% of all party identifiers give the opposing

party a rating below 50. The mean for the Democrats in relation to favorability toward their own party was 66 while their rating of the Republican Party was 18. The mean for the Republicans in relation to favorability toward their own party was 73 while their rating of the Democratic Party was 25. Not only did Republicans tend to rate their own party higher, they also rated the opposing party higher as well. However, when looking at the difference in favorability ratings for both parties, the average difference for both parties was about the same, approximately 48 points. This is consistent with the theory of negative partisanship where ratings of the other party approach zero, but ratings of someone's own party do not as closely approach 100.

Negative Partisanship and Personal Relationships

One of the main purposes of the study is to examine how politics is intertwined with personal relationships. The theory of negative partisanship claims that people have begun to make political decisions based more off their dislike for the opposing party rather than support of their own. It might also be the case that negative partisanship may be associated with decisions in choosing/handling personal relationships. When asked how much it matters to someone if their friends/family have different beliefs than them, 40% of all respondents said it did not matter at all what political beliefs they had and less than 3% said that it matters very much. Yet, these numbers begin to look different when you examine them by partisans.

I broke up the data by Democrats/Republicans who fall above and below the mean on the average feeling thermometer rating of the opposing party. Figure 1a displays that 21% of Democrats who fall above the mean on favorability towards the Republican

Party (i.e., Democrats who “like” the Republican Party more than the average Democrat; dark gray bars) say that it matters somewhat/very much that their friends and family have different political beliefs than them. Yet, that number rises to 41% for Democrats who fall below the mean on favorability towards the Republican Party (i.e., Democrats who “like” the Republican Party less than the average Democrat; light gray bars). In comparison, Figure 1b shows that 48% of Republicans who fall above the mean on favorability toward the Democratic Party say it does not matter that their friends/family have different political beliefs than them. This number falls 17 percentage points to 31% for Republicans below the mean on favorability toward the Democratic Party.

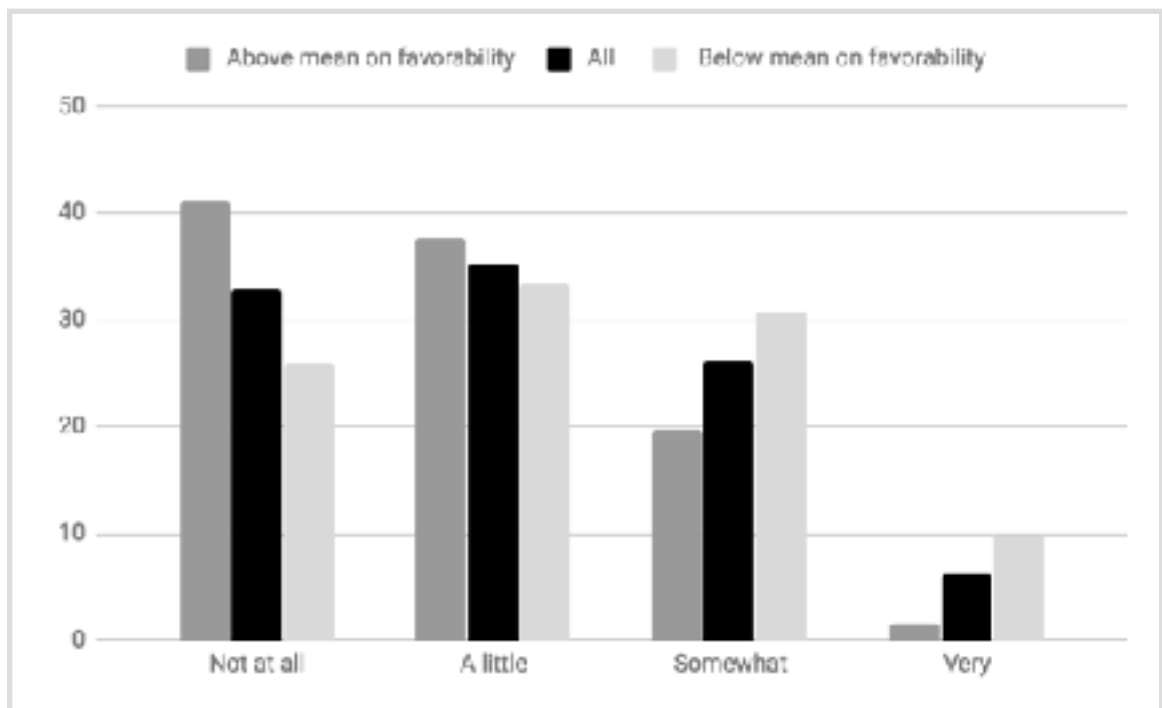


Figure 1a. How Much it Matters that Friends/Family have DIFFERENT Political Beliefs by Democrats' favorability toward the Republican Party

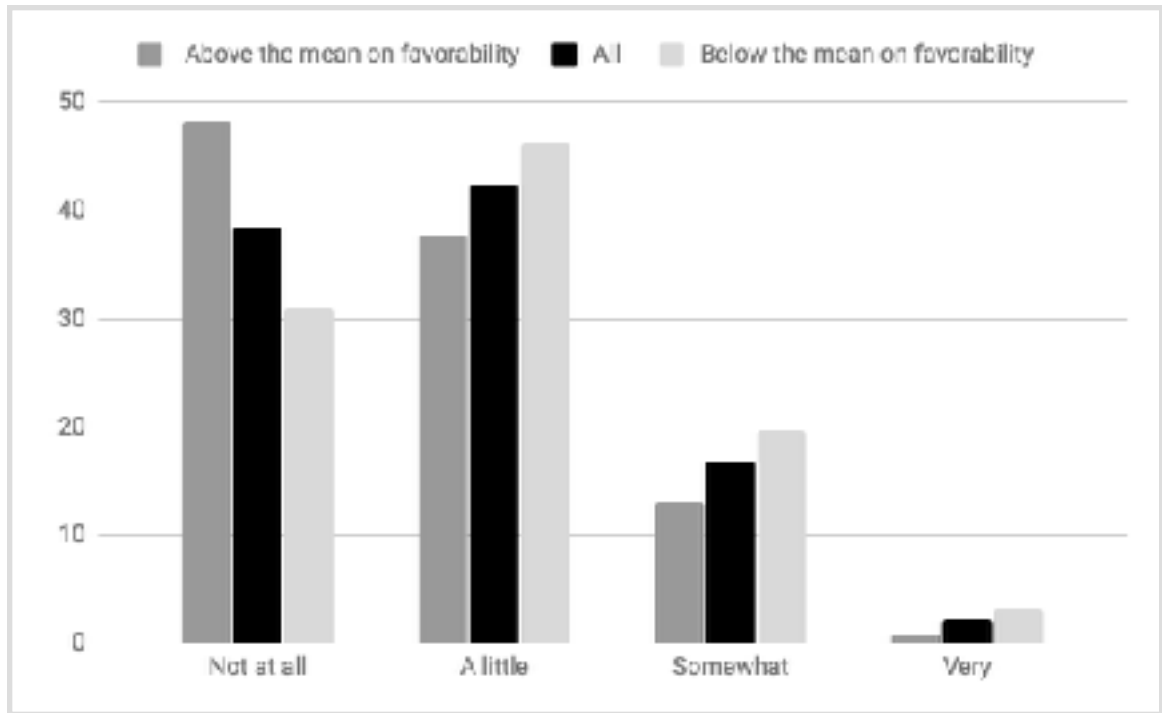


Figure 1b. How Much it Matters that Friends/Family have DIFFERENT Political Beliefs by Republicans' Favorability toward the Democratic Party

The respondents were also asked how varying political beliefs affected the composition of their friend group. Specifically, they were asked: “Thinking about personal relationships and politics, which comes closer to your view?” Overall, 56% of people said that it does not matter or that they typically have friends with different political beliefs than them (black bar in far left of Figure 2a). Seventy percent of Democrats above the mean on favorability toward the Republican Party (dark gray bar in far left of Figure 2a) said it does not matter and only 29% said it was *easier* to have a relationship with someone who shares the same political beliefs as them (dark gray bar in far right of Figure 2a). But for Democrats who fall below the mean on favorability (light gray bars), only 43% say it does not matter and then 57% say it is easier to have friends with similar

political beliefs or it is harder to have a relationship with someone who does not share the same political beliefs as them.

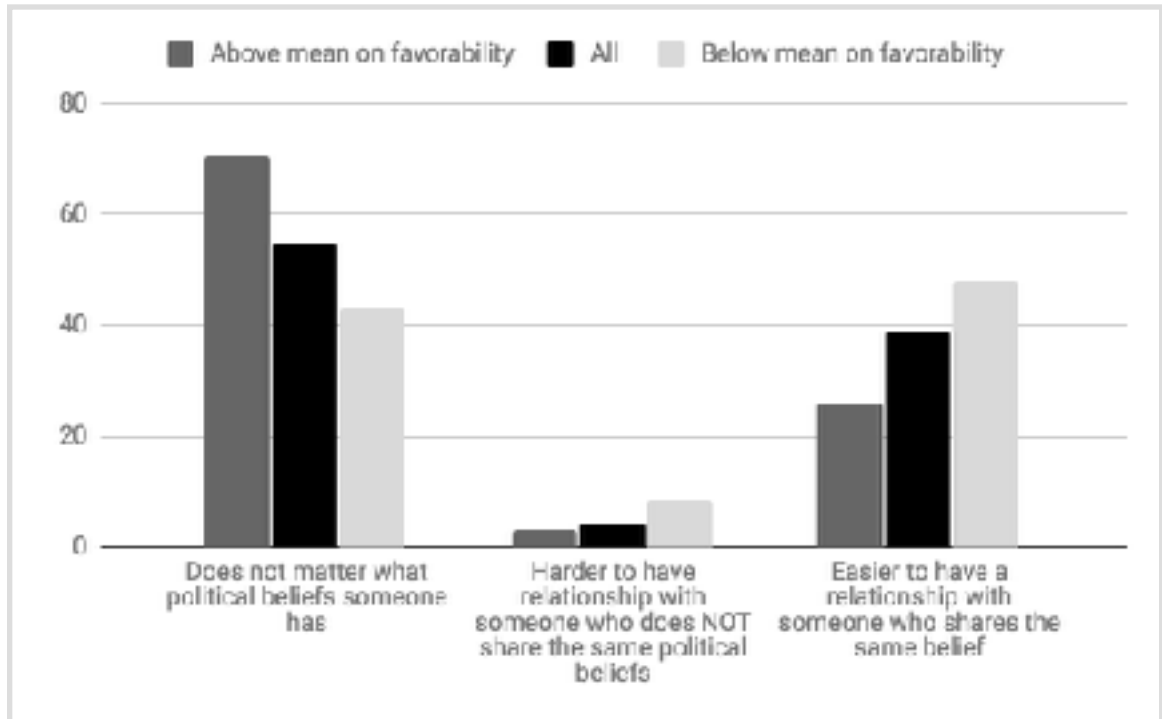


Figure 2a. Views on Personal Relationships and Politics by Democrats' Favorability toward the Republican Party

This trend is evident for Republicans (see Figure 2b), with 63% of Republicans above the mean on favorability toward the Democratic Party saying it does not matter that their friends/family have different political beliefs than them (dark gray bar in far left of Figure 2b). Thirty-seven percent of those Republicans also said that it is easier to have a friendship with someone who has the same political beliefs or that it is *harder* to have a relationship with someone who has different political beliefs than them. Then, for Republicans who fall below the mean on favorability towards the Democratic Party (light gray

bars in Figure 2b), 42% say it does not matter that their friends/family have different political beliefs than them and 58% say it is easier to have a friendship with someone who shares the same political beliefs or it is harder to have a relationship with someone who does not share the same political beliefs as them.

In sum, for both partisans, those who view the opposing party more negatively are more likely to believe it matters that friends and family have different political beliefs than them. They are also more likely to find it difficult to have friendships with those same people and to believe it is easier to have friendships with people who share the same political beliefs as themselves.

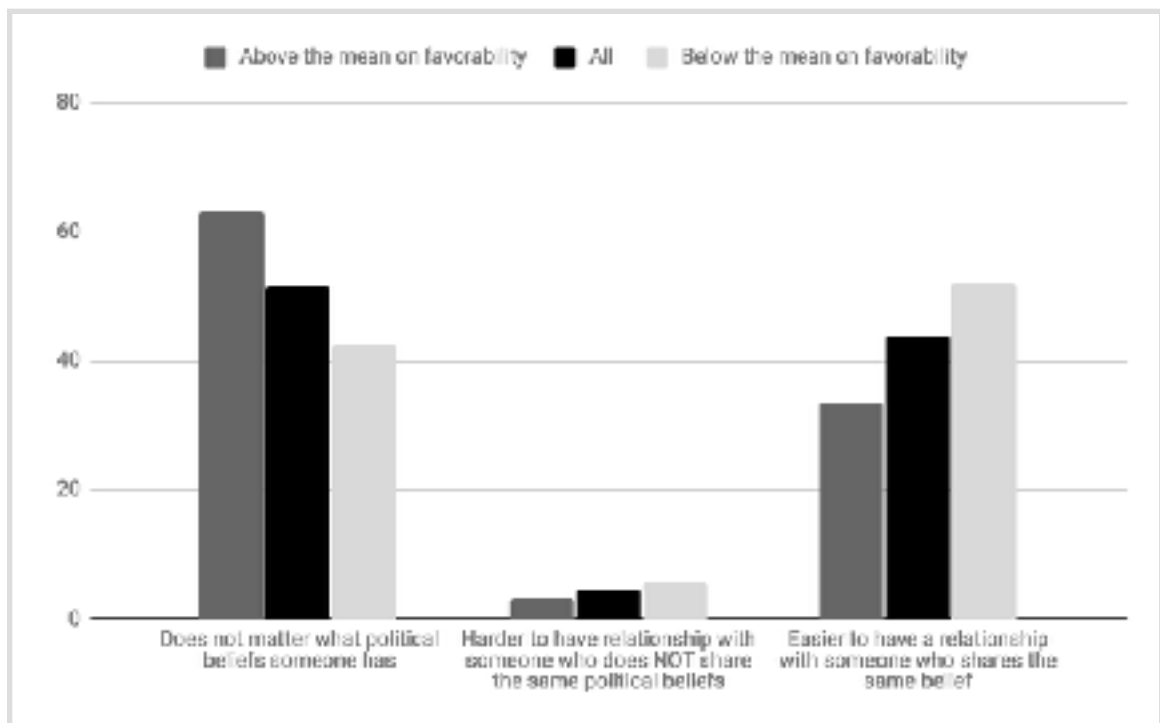


Figure 2b. Views on Personal Relationships and Politics by Republicans' Favorability toward the Democratic Party

In other words, negative partisanship is clearly present among college students at the University of Mississippi. The next section addresses to what extent social media use also plays a role in negative partisanship.

Social Media Use and Negative Partisanship

Along with the newer theory of negative partisanship, a new platform for discussing politics has also emerged—social media. Especially among college students, social media has become an increasingly integral part of their daily lives. Out of the 550 respondents, 82% reported using Facebook, 64% Twitter, 85% Snapchat, and 84% Instagram. These sites are also being used as ways of gaining and communicating political information. Fifty-nine percent of all respondents reported that they get news and headlines from Twitter and 63% reported that they get news and headlines from Facebook. To further demonstrate the growing importance of the relationship between politics and social media, it is important to note that 52% of respondents reported that social media is their primary source for political news, 27% said television, and 4% said print newspaper. But even if social media is not one's primary mode of obtaining political information, it does not mean individuals are not being exposed to political discussions over social media. Eighty percent of Twitter users and 91% of Facebook users claim that at least some of what they see on these sites is related to politics. It is therefore likely that politics, and by extension negative partisanship, and social media use have developed a pertinent, concomitant relationship. To examine this relationship, I focus on two main aspects of social media use: exposure to politics on social media and interaction with politics on social media.

Exposure to Politics on Social Media

One of the aspects that sets social media apart from many other forms of communication is that the individual user has a great deal of control over whose opinions they are exposed to. Having the ability to follow and unfollow other people on social media gives users the opportunity to form their social and friend groups in a way that is most agreeable to them. And, for some, political views are one of the factors that shapes their social media sphere.

Respondents were asked about the composition of the political views of the people they follow/are friends with on Twitter and Facebook. A majority (75-76%) of respondents said they followed people with a mix of political beliefs/were not sure about the political beliefs of the people they followed and about 13-15% said they mostly followed people who shared their same political beliefs. However, for those who follow mostly people with the same political beliefs, there are a few trends to note. When broken up by in and out party, the groups who claimed to follow people with a mix of political beliefs on Twitter, or were not sure about their political beliefs, gave the out party an average score of 24 (see Table 2a). In other words, those people gave their opposing party an average of 24 on the (0 to 100) feeling thermometer. For those who said they follow mostly people who share their political beliefs on Twitter, the average out party score was a 15. And the same trend follows for Facebook (see Table 2b).

Those on Facebook who said they don't know others' political beliefs or follow a people with a mix of political beliefs gave the out party a score between 24 and 27. But for those who follow mostly people who share their political beliefs on Facebook, the out

party score is a 16. On both Facebook and Twitter, there is about a 9 percentage point difference in out party scores between those who follow people with mostly the same political views and for anyone whose feed is not as homogeneous. However, it is important to note that in party evaluations don't move significantly, just the out party evaluations do. This is consistent with the idea of negative partisanship because, in this case, dislike of the opposing party is what differs across who one follows on social media. In other words, the more likely one is to follow a majority of people with the same political beliefs, the more likely they are to negatively view the opposing party.

Table 2a. Who Respondents Follow on Twitter by Party Status

	In Party	Out Party
Similar political beliefs	72.3	14.7
A mix of political beliefs	70.4	24.1
Not sure about their political beliefs	71.6	25.0

Note: Numbers displayed are the average party status when respondents were asked, “On a scale of 0-100, where 0 is not at all favorable and 100 is extremely favorable, please rate your feelings towards the **[Democratic/Republican] Party.**” [bold in original]

Table 2b. Who We are Friends with on Facebook by Party Status		
	In Party	Out Party
Similar political beliefs	75.5	16.0
A mix of political beliefs	71.8	23.7
Not sure about their political beliefs	68.7	26.7

Note: Numbers displayed are the average party status when respondents were asked, “On a scale of 0-100, where 0 is not at all favorable and 100 is extremely favorable, please rate your feelings towards the [**Democratic/Republican**] **Party**.” [bold in original]

Not only are some people’s social media feeds becoming more homogeneous with the beliefs of friends and family, but also with the political figures they choose to follow. Overall, a majority of students (52%) say they follow political figures that mostly share their same beliefs. For people who follow mostly people with the same political beliefs as them on Twitter, 72% of those also say they follow political figures with the same beliefs as them. But, for those who said they follow people with a mix of political beliefs, that number drops to 52% who say they mostly follow political figures with the same beliefs as them. The same trend followed for Facebook, dropping from 70% to 50%. Not only are those who follow people with mostly the same political beliefs more likely to have a more homogeneous feed all around, but they are also more likely to hold negative views of the opposing party. Those who follow political figures with mostly similar beliefs to them give the in party a score of 75 and the out party a score of 19. But for those who follow political figures that have a mix of political views, the in party received a score of 66 and the out party a score of 27. In sum, those that have a more homogeneous feed that is

congruent with their own beliefs are also more likely to display stronger support for their own party and stronger dislike for the opposing party.

The composition of the beliefs of whom the respondents follow also is associated with the respondents view of politics on social media. Respondents were asked how they felt about seeing discussions and posts about politics on social media and they were given three answer choices: “I like seeing a lot of posts and discussions on social media”, “I am worn-out by how many political posts and discussions I see on social media”, “I don’t feel strongly about these posts one way or another”.

What I found is that those who have a more homogeneous social media feed on Twitter, in terms of political beliefs, are 15 percentage points *less* likely to say they are worn out by these posts and 10 percentage points *more* likely to like seeing these posts compared to those with more heterogeneous Twitter feeds (see Figure 3a).

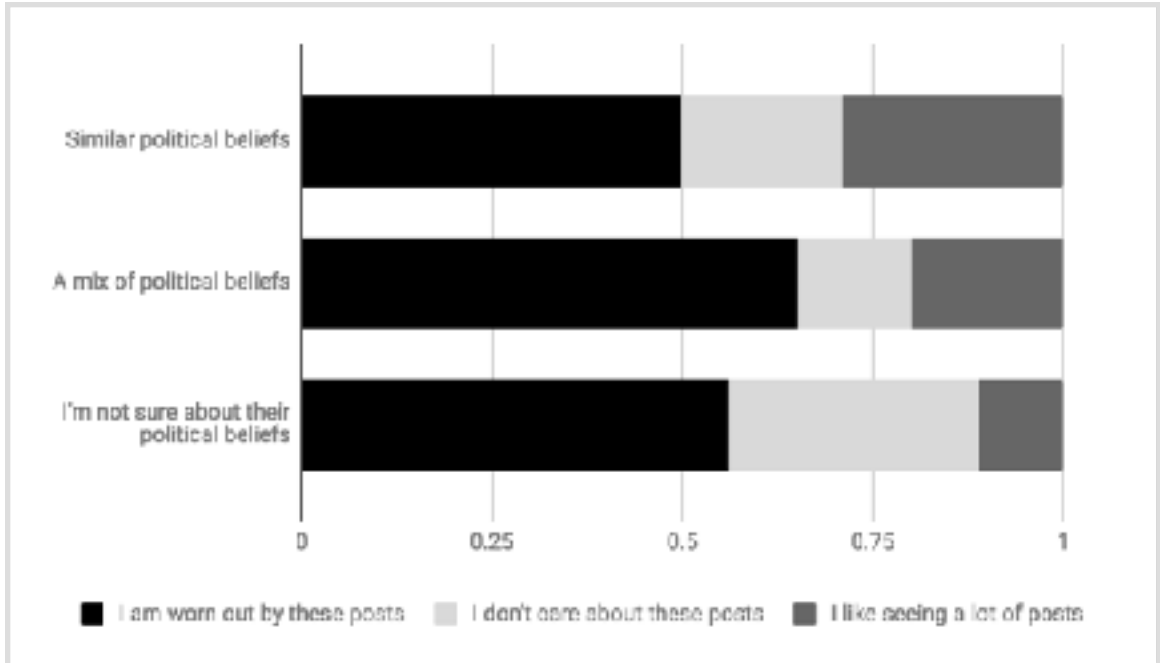


Figure 3a. Who We Follow on Twitter by How We Feel About Political Discussions/Posts on Social Media

In Figure 3b, we observe that for Facebook, the trend is the exact same but with a difference of 6 percentage points between each category. This is probably because if someone has a more homogenous feed and sphere, they are less likely to disagree about politics and, hence, less likely to get into political arguments. They are also simply exposed to less opposing viewpoints which, as discussed in the literature review, can trigger a social identity response and then cause an argument.

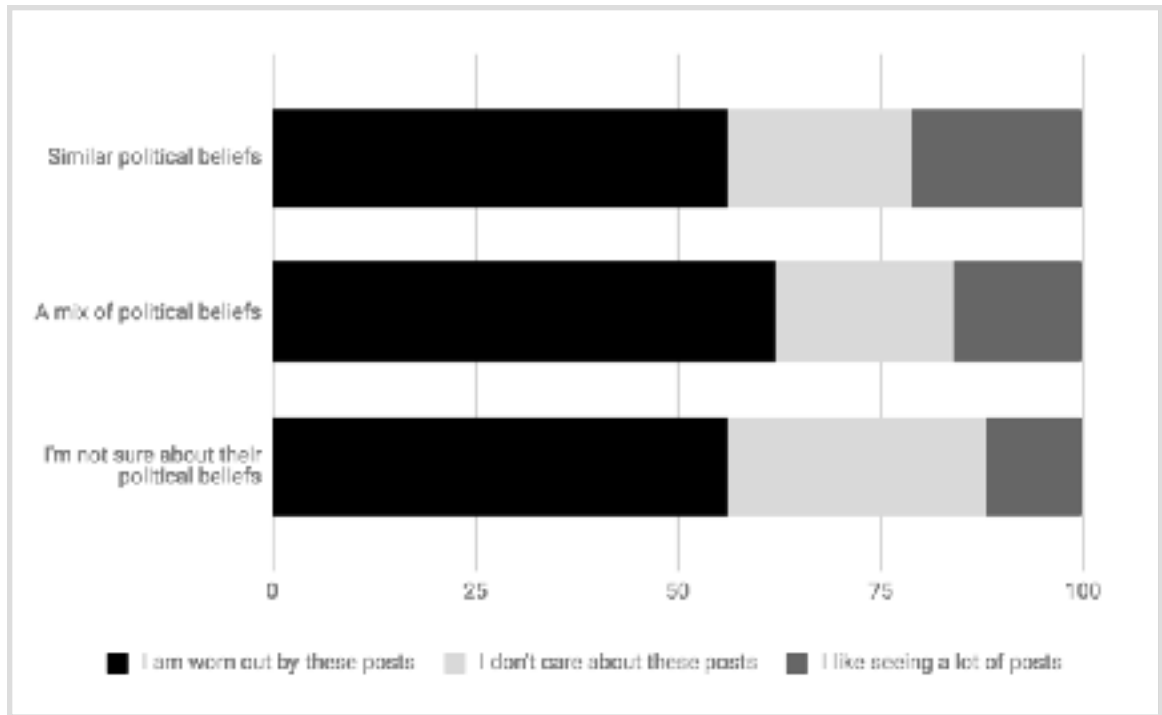


Figure 3b. Who We are Friends with on Facebook by How We Feel About Political Discussions/Posts on Social Media

Exposure to Politics on Social Media and Offline Relationships

To take the argument a little bit further, I also examined how being exposed to politics on social media is associated with respondents offline (i.e., “real life”) relationships. In order to measure this, I compared two different sets of questions. The first set compared the composition of beliefs of the *political figures followed* and whether or not political beliefs affect relationships. The second set compared the composition of the political beliefs of *people followed* and whether or not political beliefs affect relationships.

Of the respondents who claimed someone’s political beliefs did not matter to them, 41% said they followed political figures with mostly similar beliefs (black bars in

Figure 4). For those that said it is *easier* to have a relationship with someone who shares their beliefs, 34% followed political figures with a mix of beliefs (light gray bars). This left the majority (64%) indicating that they mostly followed political figures with similar beliefs as them. Of those who said it is *harder* to have a relationship with someone who does NOT share the same beliefs, however, only 26% follow political figures with a mix of views and 74% follow political figures with mostly the same beliefs. Ultimately, those who find politics to matter in determining a relationship are also more likely to follow political figures that share their same beliefs.

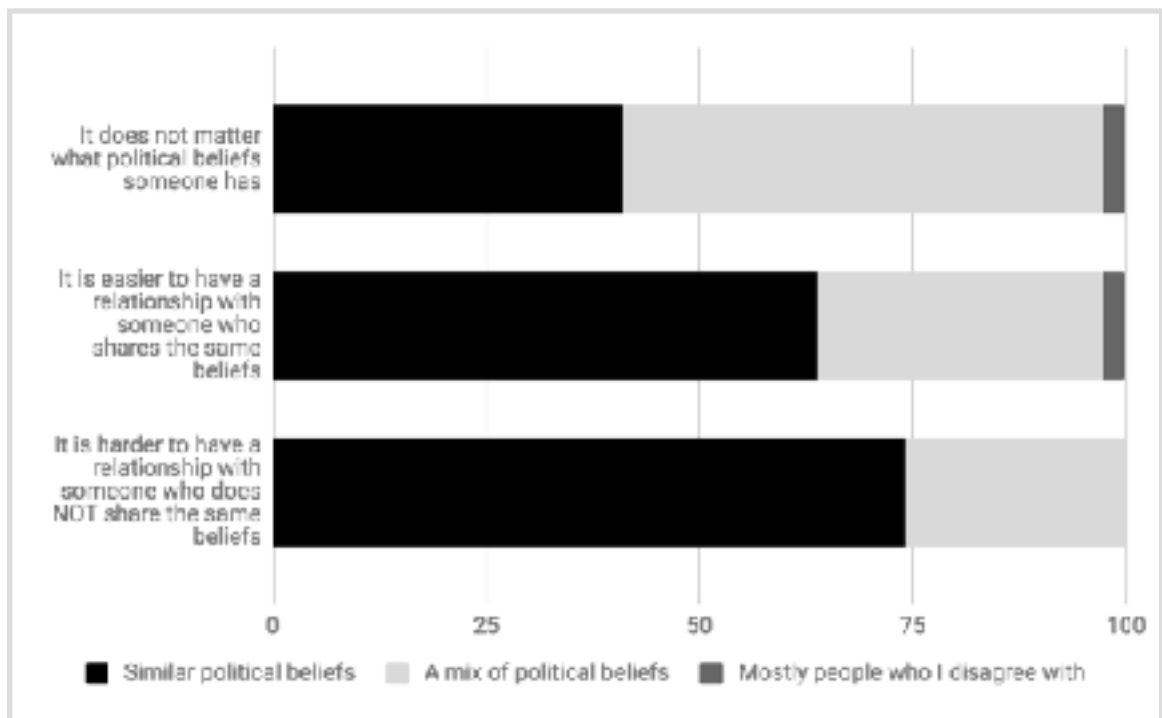


Figure 4. Views on Personal Relationships by Who We Follow/are Friends with on Social Media

I also considered the data from a different perspective. I broke the data into three main categories: those who mostly follow political figures with the same beliefs, those who follow a mix of people, and those who don't know about the political beliefs of the people they follow. Those three categories were then broken into three different percentiles: those who find it harder to have a relationship with someone who doesn't have the same political beliefs, those who find it easier to have a relationship with someone who shares the same political beliefs, and those who said it does not matter. For Twitter, what I found was those who mostly follow people with the same political beliefs are the least likely (35%) to say someone's political beliefs doesn't matter as compared to those who find it easier to have a relationship with someone who shares the same beliefs (57%) and those who don't know the political beliefs of who they follow (63%). Those who mostly follow people with the same political beliefs are also 15-22 percentage points more likely to say it is easier to have a relationship with someone who shares the same political views.

Because social media gives the option of controlling and filtering the opinions one sees, it is easier to create a more like-minded following and sphere. Those who follow more people with similar political beliefs are more likely to be negatively partisan, less likely to be worn out by politics on social media, more likely to follow political figures who also share the same political beliefs, more likely to believe it is easier to have friends with the same beliefs, and more likely to believe it is harder to have friends with different political beliefs. However, these figures only begin to address one function of social me-

dia—the *exposure* and availability of information. In the next section, I address how the *interaction* with politics over social media is also associated with negative partisanship.

Interaction with Politics on Social Media

In this section of the results, I primarily focus on the relationship between engaging/interacting with political information on social media and negative partisanship. It is important to note that the exposure to political information and the interaction with political information are not two completely separate phenomena. Both affect one another and both undoubtedly affect our daily lives. In this section I will demonstrate first how exposure relates to interaction and then how the interaction affects the respondents. To examine how the interaction/engagement with political information is related to negative partisanship, this section is broken into three different sets of results: how often one posts, how we view politics on social media, and how we respond to politics on social media.

Not only is the amount/kind of exposure to politics on social media associated with respondents' views and feelings towards politics, but it also affects how respondents engage with political information over social media. As stated previously, 80% of all Twitter users and 91% of all Facebook users claim to see some politics on their feed. On Twitter, if respondents claim to see politics, 33% of them also post about politics. But for those who don't see any politics, 0% report posting about politics. For Facebook, 25% of those who see politics also post about it. More or less, the more someone is exposed to politics on social media, the more likely they are to post about politics.

And the amount someone posts on social media about politics is also associated with their in/out party status. Overall, 27% of respondents say they post some politics on

Twitter and 23% say they post some politics on Facebook. In order to examine whether or not the *amount* someone posted about politics is associated with negative partisanship, I examined the frequency of these posts as compared to in and out party ratings, as displayed in Figure 5. When asked, “How often do you comment, post, or discuss government and politics on social media?” I found that those who comment often or sometimes (black bars) gave the out party a score of 17. But for those who claim they never post about politics (dark gray bars), the average out party score was a 26. The more frequently respondents posted about politics, the lower the score they gave the opposing party. Furthermore, those that claim to post at least some politics are two times more likely to have answered “Yes” to the question, “Has a political disagreement/argument on social media caused a tension or loss of friendship with someone?” (see Figure 6).

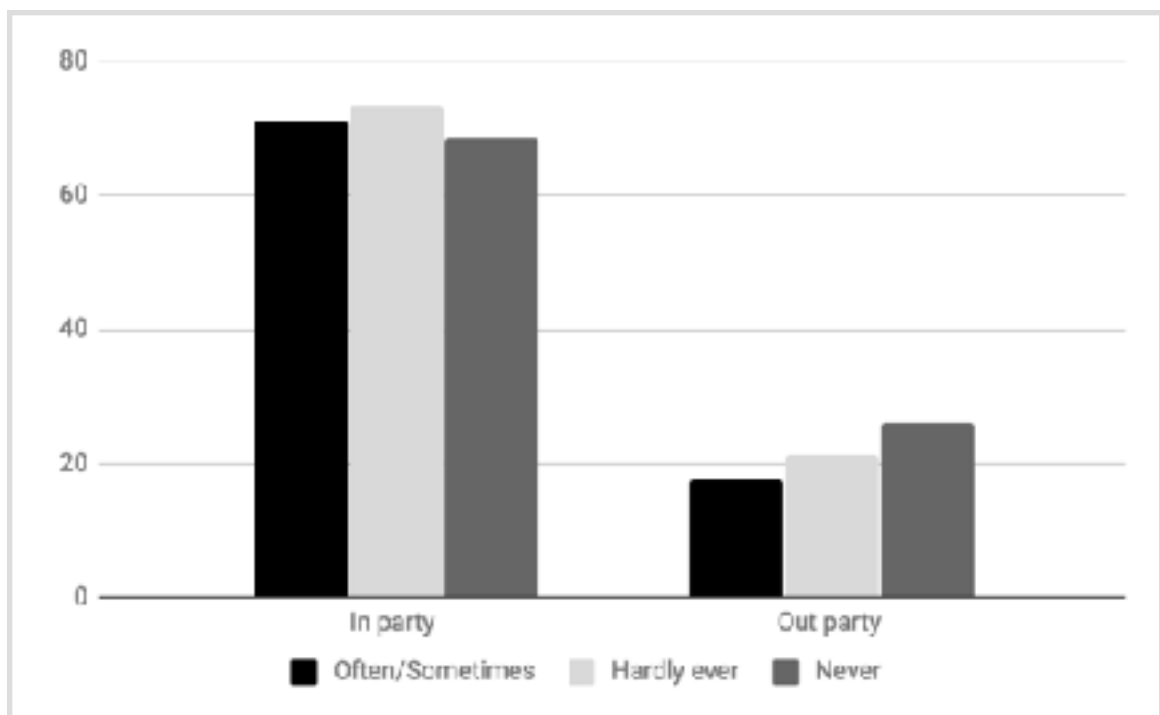


Figure 5. How Often Someone Posts about Politics by Party Status

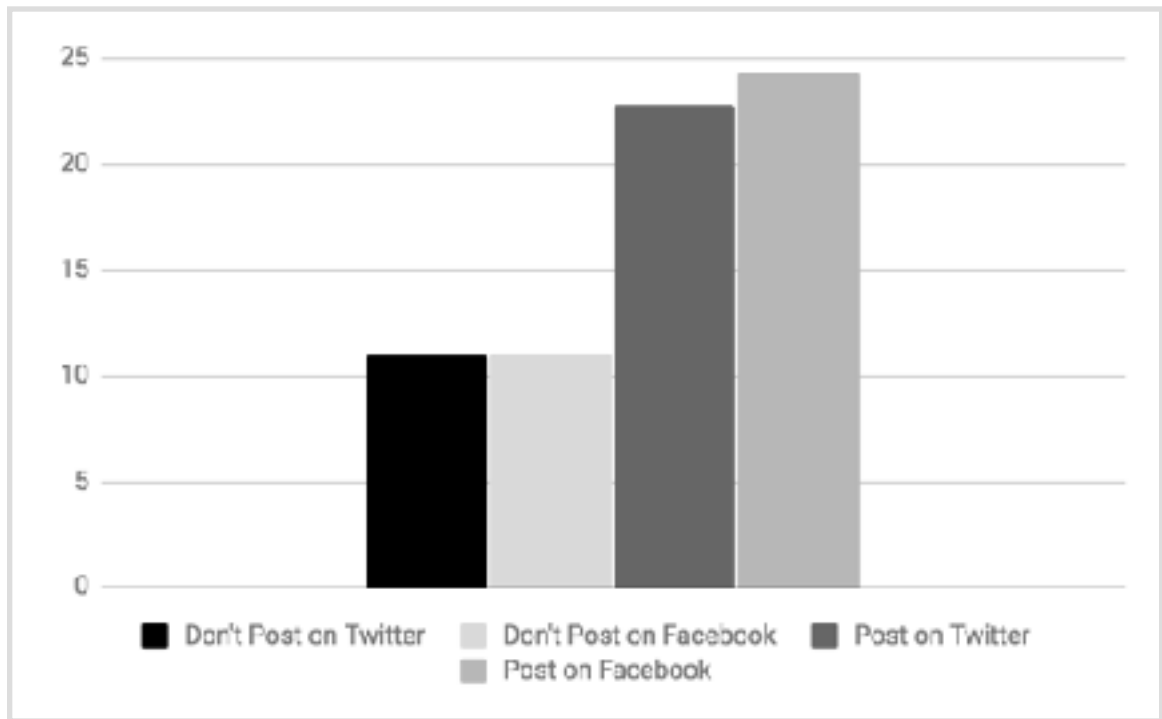


Figure 6. Percent of Respondents Who Have had a Political Disagreement/Argument on Social Media that Caused a Tension or Loss of Friendship by whether they Post About Politics on Social Media

Furthermore, whether someone posts about politics on social media is associated with how they view political discussions and posts on social media. On Twitter, 37% of people who say they post about politics on social media also say they like seeing a lot of political posts and discussions (dark gray bars in Figure 7a). Yet, for those who say they do not post about politics, only 11% say they like seeing a lot of political posts and dis-

cussions (see Figure 7a). The same trend is evident for Facebook with 34% and 13%, respectively (see Figure 7b).

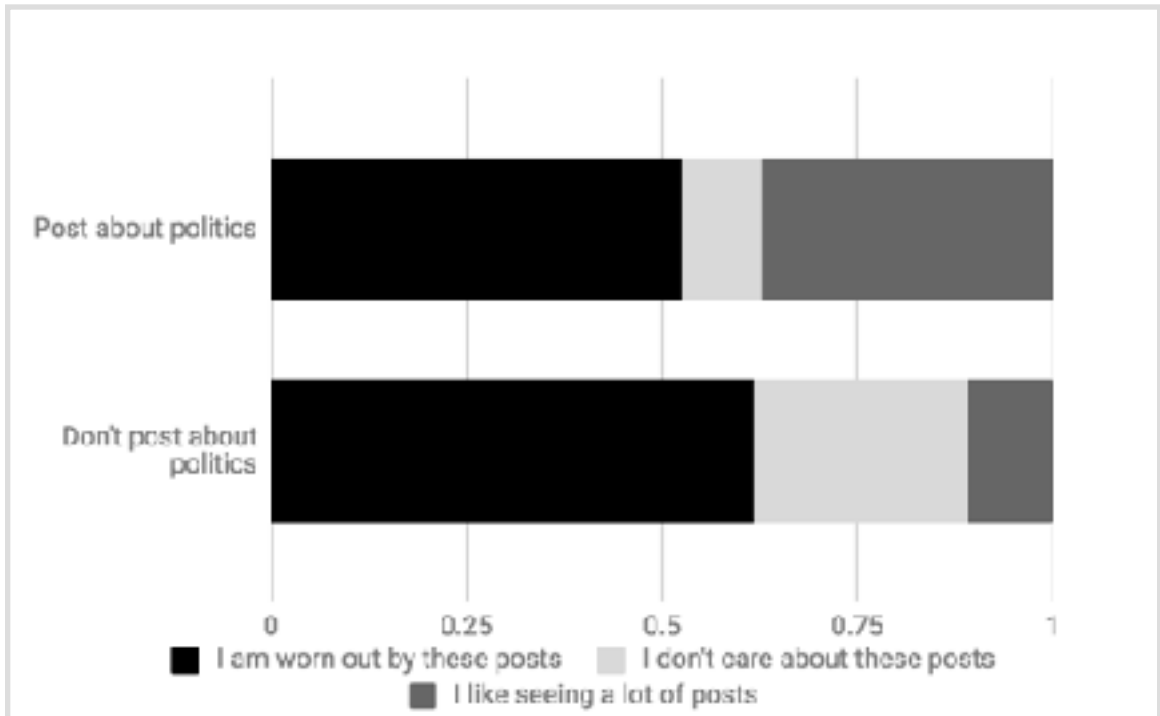


Figure 7a. If Someone Posts about Politics on Twitter by How they Feel About Political Posts/Discussions on Social Media

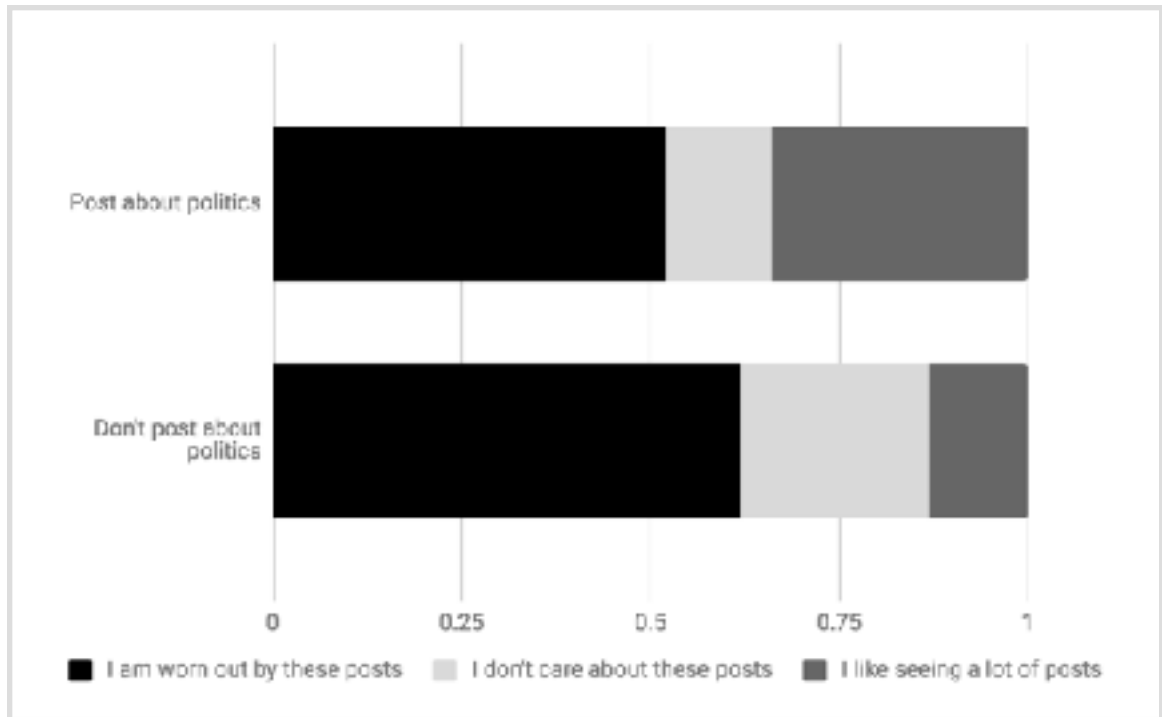


Figure 7b. If Someone Posts about Politics on Facebook by How they Feel About Political Posts/Discussions on Social Media

The more often someone posts, the less likely they are to be worn out by politics on social media. To make some connections, those that like seeing political discussions are also more negatively partisan. Now, one of the options I did consider was simply that those who gave the opposing party a lower score might just enjoy engaging more with politics in general. However, when respondents were asked “In your experience, when you talk about politics with someone on social media you DISagree with do you generally find it to be interesting and informative or stressful and frustrating?” Overall, 66% said it was frustrating and 34% said it was interesting. For those that said it was frustrating, the average out party rating was a 20 as compared to a 27 for those who said it was interesting. It is important to note that although those who are more negatively partisan are inclined to like political discussions and information in general on social media, they are

not more inclined to find discussing politics with someone they disagree with on social media more stressful and frustrating.

How respondents view political discussions on social media is also associated with how respondents tended to react to politics on social media. One question on the survey asked students if they had done any of the following things on social media because of something related to politics: “changed your settings to see fewer posts from someone who disagrees with you politically”; “blocked or unfriended someone who disagrees with you politically”. Because performing these actions offers a negative connotation, many people are hesitant to admit to it. In order to combat that, I also asked a follow up question that gave the respondents an option to choose why they had blocked, unfriended, or changed their settings to see less of someone on social media. The options were: “posted too much political content”, “posted things you disagreed with”, “posted something you found offensive”, “were abusive or harassing”, and “some other reason”. To be sure, the percentages of respondents who said they had done one, or multiple, of those things was higher when there was a specific reason given. Next, I compared the data between how people felt about discussing politics with someone they DISagree with to whether or not they had performed any of these actions (see Table 3). As displayed in Table 3, those who said they found it interesting to discuss politics with someone they disagree with were less likely to perform any of the actions, in all six categories, than those who said they found it stressful to discuss politics with someone they disagree with.

Table 3. Reactions on Social Media by Views of Discussions on Social Media with Someone who DISagrees Politically			
	Overall	Stressful	Interesting
<i>Have done on social media because someone disagrees politically</i>			
Changed settings to see less posts	32	37	23
Blocked or unfriended	30	37	16
<i>Blocked/unfriended/changed settings to see less of someone because they...</i>			
Posted too much political content	46	53	36
Posted things you disagreed with	34	41	21
Posted something offensive	52	57	43
Were abusive or harassing	57	60	53

Note: Table entries are percentages.

In Table 3, we see that those who find it frustrating and stressful are 14 percentage points more likely to have changed their settings, 21 percentage points more likely to have blocked someone who disagrees with them politically, 17 percentage points more likely to have blocked/unfriended/changed settings to see less someone because they post too much, 20 percentage points more likely to have blocked/unfriended/changed settings to see less of someone if they posted something they disagreed with, and 14 percentage points more likely to have blocked/unfriended/changed settings to see less of someone if they posted something they found offensive. Thus, it appears to be the case that people

who find it stressful/frustrating are more likely to be negatively partisan, more negative partisans are also more likely to perform those actions. To be sure, I also more directly tested this hypothesis.

Table 4 displays the same set of questions, but by in/out party status. The table shows that even the numbers for those who were below the mean on the in party (meaning they like their own party less than the average person) were still higher than those above the mean on the out party (meaning they dislike the opposing party less than the average person). It is the feelings towards the opposing party that appear to drive more of these actions rather than support of one's own party. To further that theory, I looked at the difference between those who fall above the mean on the out party and those who fall below the mean on the out party. Those who fell below the mean on the rating of the out party, meaning they are more negatively partisan, were more likely to have performed those actions across all six categories.

Lastly, I examined how these interactions on social media spilled over into respondents' offline worlds (i.e., "real life"). As stated previously, those who were found to post at least some about politics on Facebook and Twitter are two times more likely to have had a political discussion/argument on social media cause a tension/ loss of friendship with someone.

Table 4. Reactions on Social Media by Party Status				
	Above mean on In party	Below mean on In party	Above mean on Out party	Below mean on Out party
<i>Have done on social media because someone disagrees politically</i>				
Changed settings to see less posts	30	35	27	39
Blocked or unfriended	29	31	24	39
<i>Blocked/unfriended/ changed settings to see less of someone because they...</i>				
Posted too much political content	43	52	46	49
Posted things you disagreed with	35	32	31	39
Posted something offensive	51	54	49	58
Were abusive or harassing	58	57	55	61

Note: Table entries are percentages.

Overall, 14% of all respondents said that a political discussion/argument on social media caused a tension or loss of friendship with someone. Once again, the percentages of those who said yes appear to be driven more by out party feelings than by in party feelings (see Figure 8). Eighteen percent of those who fall below the mean on the out party said yes while only 11% of those who were above the mean on the out party said yes. It is

important to note that those who are above the mean on the out party are the least likely to have answered yes to the question, even a bit less likely than those who fall below the mean on the in party. This means that even those who like their own party less than the average person are more likely to have said that a political discussion/argument on social media caused a tension or loss of friendship with someone than those who like the opposing party more than the average person. Overall, it is feelings towards the out party, as opposed to the in party, that appear to influence respondents' political decisions the most.

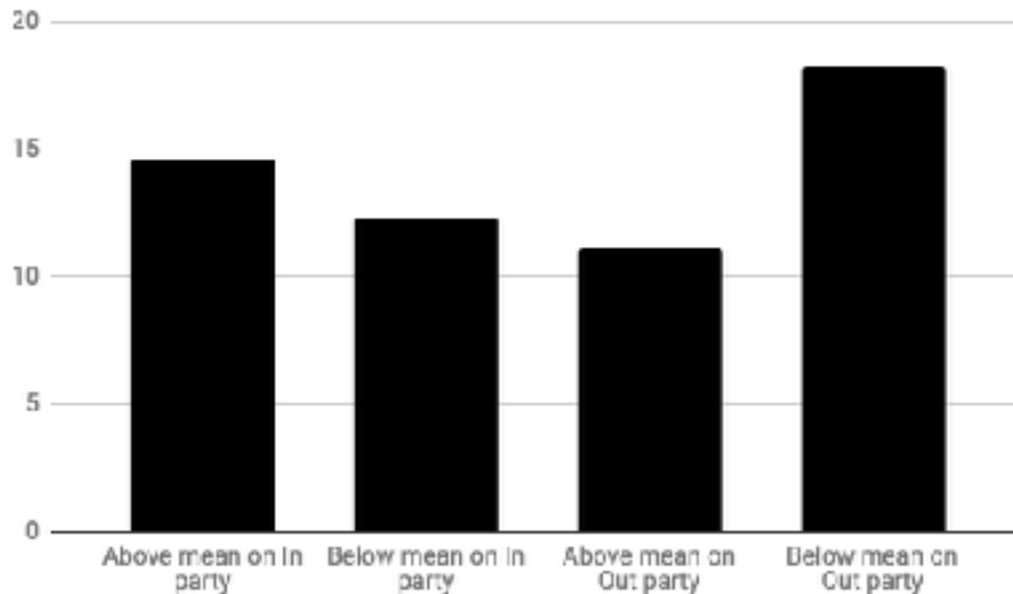


Figure 8. Percent of Respondents Who Have had a Political Disagreement/Argument on Social Media that Caused a Tension or Loss of Friendship by Party Status

Conclusion

There is no denying that today's political climate is vastly different from the one thirty years ago or even a decade ago. With the highest recorded amount of straight ticket voting in US history, partisanship has become the single most certain predictor of how an individual is going to vote in an election (Abramowitz and Webster 2015). Party competition is as strong as ever, as is political animosity. Although approval rates of one's own party have not changed a great deal over the years, approval rates of the opposing party have dropped tremendously (Pew Research 2014). Negative partisanship has become a predominant characteristic of today's politics. That trend stays consistent with the students of the University of Mississippi as on the standard feeling thermometer rating (ranging from extremely cold at 0 to extremely warm at 100) Democrats gave the Republican Party an average score of 18 and the Republicans gave the Democratic Party an average score of 23. This suggests that the dislike of the opposing party may be a more important driver of one's political decisions than support of one's own party.

Just as there has been a good deal of research on the effect of negative partisanship on politics, there has also been more recent research studying the effects of social media and politics. My thesis was designed to study the relationship between the two areas of study: social media use and negative partisanship. It is imperative to begin to study this relationship as there is no foreseeable decline in negative partisanship and it is likely that social media use will only continue to grow. Citizens use social media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, to share their views, have access to a plethora of political news, follow whichever political figures they choose, and to have political debates with people

across the country. However, it may be the case that social media is catalyzing the effects of negative partisanship.

Among my studies most important findings, is that college students at the University of Mississippi who are more negatively partisan are (1) more likely to find it difficult to befriend someone with different political beliefs than them, (2) more likely to follow people on social media with the same political beliefs, (3) more likely to have blocked or unfriended someone who disagrees with them politically, and (4) more likely to have lost a friend due to a political argument over social media. It is not a completely linear relationship, nor is it simply cause and effect. The relationship between social media and negative partisanship is complex and interwoven. Albeit, it is certain that at every level of engaging with social media, whether it be who we choose to follow or how we feel about arguing with opposing viewpoints, negative partisanship is a factor. Although I focus on students at the University of Mississippi, it is likely that similar results would be obtained with other student populations, if not the general population.

It is impossible to say whether or not negative partisanship that was pre-existing causes these factors or whether social media has made people more negatively partisan. To determine such would require a study done on subjects over a long period of time to see how they changed. Nevertheless, the use of social media certainly does not appear to reduce feelings of negative partisanship. For example, those who say that their primary source of political news is social media tend to like their own party less compared to those who say their primary source is television or print news (Democrats by 8 percentage points and Republicans by 3 percentage points). Moreover, recent research suggests

that even being exposed to opposing viewpoints on social media does not necessarily help to decrease negative partisanship (Bail et al. 2018). Only time will be able to tell exactly which factor affects the other but, in the meantime, my study and other ongoing work provides some important insights on the relationship between social media use and negative partisanship.

Appendix

Survey Instrument

Q1 You are being asked to complete an online research survey that will take approximately 3-5 minutes. This survey is part of a research study conducted by the University of Mississippi. The goal of this survey is to ask you some questions about yourself and obtain your views about public affairs and current events. Findings from this study may be reported in scholarly journals, at academic seminars, and at research association meetings. The data will be stored at a secured location and retained indefinitely. Confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. Your participation in this online survey involves risks similar to a person's everyday use of the Internet. No identifying information about you will be made public and any views you express will be kept completely anonymous. Your participation is voluntary. Even if you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty. There are no known risks associated with this study beyond those associated with everyday life. Although this study will not benefit you personally, we hope that our results will add to the knowledge about how people form their opinions. Note that once you submit responses to the survey the researcher will be unable to extract your anonymous data from the database if you wish it to be withdrawn. To participate in the study, you must be at least 18 years old and a U.S. citizen. If you have any questions about the research, you can contact Conor Dowling at cdowling@olemiss.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or concerns about the conduct of this study, you may contact The University of Mississippi Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, 100 Barr Hall, University, MS 38677, 662-915-7482, irb@olemiss.edu.

- ☐ I agree to participate (1)
- ☐ I do NOT agree to participate (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If You are being asked to complete an online research survey that will take approximately 3-5 minute... = I do NOT agree to participate

Q2 Are you registered to vote?

- ☐ Yes (1)
 - ☐ No (2)
 - ☐ Don't Know (3)
-

Q3 Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, an Independent, or what?

- ☐ Democrat (1)
 - ☐ Republican (2)
 - ☐ Independent (3)
 - ☐ Other (4)
-

Q4 If Other, which party is that?

Display This Question:

If Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, an Independent,... = Independent

Or Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, an Independent,... = Other

Q5 Do you think of yourself as closer to the Democratic Party, closer to the Republican Party, or equally close to both parties?

- ☐ Closer to the Democratic Party (1)
 - ☐ Closer to the Republican Party (2)
 - ☐ Equally close to both parties (3)
-

Display This Question:

If Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, an Independent,... = Democrat

Q6 Would you call yourself a strong Democrat or not a very strong Democrat?

- ☐ Strong Democrat (1)
- ☐ Not a very strong Democrat (2)

Display This Question:

If Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, an Independent,... = Republican

Q7 Would you call yourself a strong Republican or not a very strong Republican?

- ☐ Strong Republican (1)
- ☐ Not a very strong Republican (2)

Q8 On a scale of 0-100, where 0 is extremely liberal and 100 is extremely conservative, where would you place yourself?

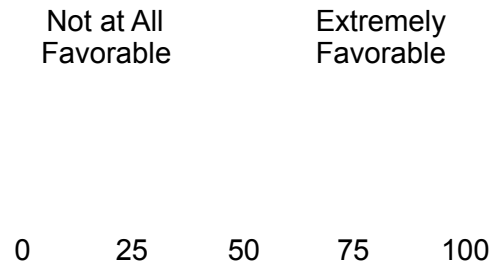
Extremely Liberal Extremely Conservative

0 25 50 75 100

(0-100) (1)



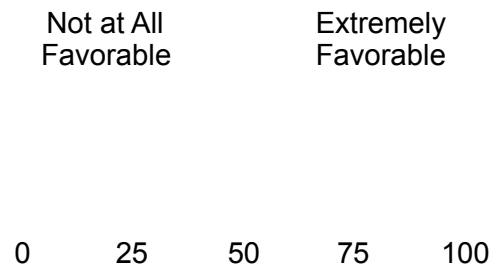
Q9 On a scale of 0-100, where 0 is not at all favorable and 100 is extremely favorable, please rate your feelings towards the **Democratic Party**.



(0-100) (1)



Q10 On a scale of 0-100, where 0 is not at all favorable and 100 is extremely favorable, please rate your feelings towards the **Republican Party**.



(0-100) (1)



Q11 How much does it matter to you that your friends/family have DIFFERENT political beliefs than you?

- ☐ Not at all (1)
 - ☐ A little (2)
 - ☐ Somewhat (3)
 - ☐ Very (4)
-

Q12 Thinking about personal relationships and politics, which comes closer to your view?

- ☐ I typically have friends that have different political beliefs from me (1)
 - ☐ It does not matter to me what political beliefs someone has (2)
 - ☐ It is easier to have a relationship with someone who shares the same political beliefs as me (3)
 - ☐ It is harder to have a relationship with someone who shares the same political beliefs as me (4)
 - ☐ I do not typically have friends that have have different political beliefs than me (5)
-

Q13 What is your primary mode of obtaining political information/news?

- ☐ Print Newspaper (1)
 - ☐ Television News Channels (2)
 - ☐ Social Media (3)
 - ☐ Other (4)
-

Q14 Do you use the following social media sites? Check all that apply.

- ☐ Facebook (1)
 - ☐ Twitter (2)
 - ☐ Instagram (3)
 - ☐ Tumblr (4)
 - ☐ LinkedIn (5)
 - ☐ Reddit (6)
 - ☐ Snapchat (7)
-

Q15 Do you ever get news or news headlines on **Twitter**? By news we mean information about events and issues that involve more than just your friends or family.

- ☐ Yes (1)
 - ☐ No (2)
-

Q16 Do you ever get news or news headlines on **Facebook**? By news we mean information about events and issues that involve more than just your friends or family.

- ☐ Yes (1)
 - ☐ No (2)
-

Q17 How often do you comment, post, or discuss government and politics with others on social media?

- ☐ Often (1)
 - ☐ Sometimes (2)
 - ☐ Hardly Ever (3)
 - ☐ Never (4)
-

Q18 Do most of the people you follow on **Twitter** have...

- ☐ Similar political beliefs to you (1)
 - ☐ Different political beliefs from you (2)
 - ☐ A mix of various political beliefs (3)
 - ☐ I'm not sure about their political beliefs (4)
-

Q19 Do most of the people you are friends with on **Facebook** have...

- ☐ Similar political beliefs to you (1)
 - ☐ Different political beliefs from you (2)
 - ☐ A mix of various political beliefs (3)
 - ☐ I'm not sure about their political beliefs (4)
-

Q20 How much of what you **see on Twitter** is related to politics?

- ☐ A lot (1)
 - ☐ Some (2)
 - ☐ A little (3)
 - ☐ None (4)
-

Q21 How much of what you **see on Facebook** is related to politics?

- ☐ A lot (1)
 - ☐ Some (2)
 - ☐ A little (3)
 - ☐ None (4)
-

Q22 How much of what you **post on Twitter** is related to politics?

- ☐ A lot (1)
 - ☐ Some (2)
 - ☐ A little (3)
 - ☐ None (4)
-

Q23 How much of what you **post on Facebook** is related to politics?

- ☐ A lot (1)
 - ☐ Some (2)
 - ☐ A little (3)
 - ☐ None (4)
-

Q24 Thinking about posts and discussions you see on social media about politics, which comes closer to your view?

- ☐ I like seeing a lot of posts and discussions on social media (1)
 - ☐ I am worn-out by how many political posts and discussions I see on social media (2)
 - ☐ I don't feel strongly about these posts one way or another (3)
-

Q25 In your experience, when you talk about politics with people on social media you DISagree with, do you generally find it to be..

- ☐ Interesting and informative (1)
 - ☐ Stressful and frustrating (2)
-

Q26 Compared to the political discussions you witness in person, are the political discussions you witness on social media...

- ☐ More civil (1)
 - ☐ Less civil (2)
 - ☐ About the same (3)
-

Q27 Compared to the political discussions you witness in person, are the political discussions you witness on social media...

- ☐ More informative (1)
 - ☐ Less informative (2)
 - ☐ About the same (3)
-

Q28 How well do you think the following statements describe social media?

Very well (1)

Somewhat well (2)

Not at all (3)

People say things
when discussing
politics on social
media they would
never say in
person. (1)

Social media has
helped to bring
new voices into
political discussion.
(2)

People don't say
things about
politics on social
media because
they are afraid they
will get criticized.
(3)

Social media helps
people get
involved with
issues that matter
to them. (4)

Social media is a
good way to learn
about what political
candidates are
really like. (5)

Q29 How often do you say things on social media, relating to politics, that you would not say in person?

- ☐ Never (1)
 - ☐ Rarely (2)
 - ☐ Somewhat often (3)
 - ☐ Often (4)
-

Q30 Have you done any of the following things on social media because of something related to politics?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Changed your settings to see fewer posts from someone who disagrees with you politically (1)

Blocked or unfriended someone who disagrees with you politically (2)

Q31 Have you ever blocked, unfriended, or changed your settings to see less of someone because they...

Yes (1)

No (2)

Posted too much political
content (1)

Posted things you
disagreed with (2)

Posted something you
found offensive (3)

Were abusive or
harassing (4)

Some other reason (5)

Q32 Has a political disagreement/argument on social media caused a tension or loss of friendship with someone?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

Q33 Do you currently follow any candidates or other political figures on social media?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

Q34 Would you say the political figures you follow are...

☐ Mostly people who share your views (1)

☐ Mostly people who do NOT share your views (2)

☐ A mix of people with different political views (3)

Q35 People follow political figures they disagree with for a number of reasons. Do you personally follow political figures you disagree with because...

- ☐ You like to stay informed about what people on both sides are saying (1)
- ☐ You find it entertaining to follow people you disagree with (2)
- ☐ You like to argue with the other side's supporter (3)
- ☐ You like to share information that makes the other side look bad (4)
- ☐ Some other reason (5)

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